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ABSTRACT

Two articles combined here describe aspects of the Akron, Ohio Public Schools' summer foreign language immersion camps for both students and teachers. The first article, "The Akron Story Part I: Summer Foreign Language Camps" (John D. Durden and Sandra K. Strauber), outlines the structure of the camps, in which students live in simulated cultures, either French or Spanish, entering through customs and participating in target culture activities as well as traditional summer camp activities, including singing, crafts, dancing, outdoor sports, conversation groups, special celebrations, flea markets, visiting a bank and store using foreign currency, and dramatics. All activities in the camps are conducted in the target language, and the adults have native or near-native target language skills. The second article, "The Akron Story Part II: Europe on \$15 a Day" (John D. Durden, Marguerite M. Terrill, and Shirley Perisutti), describes the participation of French and Spanish teachers in two week-long institutes sponsored by the Akron Public Schools through a grant from a philanthropic foundation. The institutes, which provided a professional development opportunity in a total immersion situation, were scheduled at the same time and on the same site as the schools' summer foreign language camps for secondary school students. Advantages to the teachers included socialization with native speakers of French and Spanish, interaction with students, opportunities to learn new ideas and techniques from the master teachers teaching the students, and contact with other language enthusiasts, including college students and program administrators. (MSE)

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THE AKRON STORY PART I: SUMMER FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAMPS

John D. Durden and Sandra K. Strauber
Akron Public Schools, Akron, OH

Immersion in a foreign atmosphere with native speakers of French and Spanish, reasonable costs, and a week spent in camp is the formula for a positive foreign language experience. By the end of the summer in 1983, approximately 450 students from age 12 to 15 have vacationed in Le Pays des Champions or in La Tierra de Campeones. These French and Spanish camps located in northeast Ohio, most recently at Hiran House Camp in Chagrin Falls, have been partially funded by grants received from the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, and, in 1983, from the Akron Community Foundation.

From the lines that form to go through customs on the first day to the often-tearful adieu and adiós on the last day, students live in a simulated foreign culture where they can assimilate language and information about their adopted countries. As students participate in camp activities, their language skills and vocabulary are developed, but even more evident is their enthusiasm for learning and using the target language. It is hoped that this very successful experience will carry over to the classrooms and enrollments in the fall.

Planning for the camps has been an ongoing operation for staff members of the Akron Public Schools and colleagues in the Ohio Modern Language Teachers Association. The core group of planners has developed funding, organized activities, hired staff, found campers and then used every ounce of physical energy during the camp weeks to ensure a memorable time for all. The hard-working members of the core group, headed by John Durden of the Akron Public Schools, are John Conroy, East High School, Akron; Dana Novelli, Jennings Middle School, Akron; Elissa Parenti, Kenmore High School, Akron; Shirley Perisutti, North High School, Akron; Michael Rasile, Timken High School, Canton; and Marguerite Terrill, Akron.

A typical day begins at 7:30 with calisthenics and flag raising before breakfast. Foreign language songs, dances, crafts and soccer take up most of the morning. The songs and dances include traditional as well as modern music and steps, and tapes of the music are available to campers through the camp store. French crafts include quilling and making kiosks and Mardi Gras masks, while for the Spanish, God's eyes, yarn paintings, paper flowers and tin ornaments keep everyone busy overtime.

A half hour of conversation in small groups precedes lunch, and after lunch there is an hour's quiet time. Beginning at 2:30, campers can choose from a variety of activities: swimming, visiting the bank and store, cooking, canoeing, playing volley-

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ball, hiking or finishing their craft projects. A second conversation group is held before dinner as is the flag-lowering ceremony.

While many daytime events involve small groups of campers, all campers participate together in evening activities. The first evening, skits dramatizing some camp rules are performed by very "hammy" counselors. On another evening, Mardi Gras/Carnaval is a chance for students to join in a celebration from the foreign culture using masks made in crafts and dances learned in the morning classes. French campers crown a king and queen, while agile Spanish campers have a limbo contest. Olympic team games and singing around the campfire are other evening events enjoyed each year. All campers participate in the Talent Show on the final evening performing skits, songs, and dances that have been prepared by each cabin. Some cabins repeat their performances for parents the following morning.

Over the three years that the camps have been in operation, evenings have also seen scavenger hunts and ghost hunts, piñata breaking, flea markets (complete with bartering in the foreign language), and demonstrations of fencing, folk and flamenco dancing, ballet, mime, and gestures.

The foreign flavor of the camp is maintained in many ways. The use of the target language pervades everything, as does the example set by the many adults with native or near-native speaking abilities. Activities such as the Mardi Gras and Carnaval or the flea markets highlight specific aspects of the adopted culture, while such activities as the calisthenics, the flag ceremonies, and grace before meals, all done in the foreign language, become automatic, thus providing students with a real sense of living in a foreign culture. The surprise of watching a stranger paw through one's belongings at customs, of finding the silverware in the "wrong" position at the table, the confusion aroused by trying to use non-American money in the camp store, or the anxiety felt when a key word is forgotten - these are the learning experiences difficult to produce in the classroom but part and parcel of the immersion process.

Although the camps are planned to benefit campers, they also result in personal and professional growth for the teacher-counselors. The constant use of the foreign language, the availability of natives for language and cultural information, the presence of colleagues for sharing ideas and techniques, and the experience of living with other people all add up to an unforgettable and exciting week.

The success of the camps can be measured in part by the sadness felt as campers leave and staff dismantles cabin decorations. But another measure of the success of the camps is the planning already underway for next year.

THE AKRON STORY PART II: EUROPE ON \$15 A DAY

John D. Durden, Marguerite M. Ferrill, and Shirley Perisutti
Akron Public Schools, Akron, OH

Last summer 39 French and Spanish teachers from 28 Ohio communities left their homes and families for a week of total immersion in a foreign language and culture. After passing through customs on the afternoon of August 14, 1983, the 19 Spanish-language teachers were met with abrazos and cries of "Hola," "Bienvenidos," and "Buenas tardes." In the distance, the rich melody of the cumbia filled the summer air. Smiles from the natives in gaily colored sombreros welcomed them to the new land. Suitcases were pushed aside and forgotten as hosts and newcomers reached out and greeted each other in Spanish. One week later, on another bright and sunny afternoon, the 20 French-language teachers began their foreign adventure. A middle-aged French-speaking woman greeted them and helped direct them to their hotels. They were all delighted to learn that they would be lodged on "Ile de la Cité" and "Ile Saint-Louis," two charming islands in the middle of the Seine River in the heart of Paris, France. During the following week, the teachers dined "Chez Maxim," danced "Le canard," sang "a la française," made French arts and crafts, and even played "le foot!" And how was all of this possible?

Through a 1983 grant by the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, these Ohio teachers were able to participate in the French and Spanish Summer Institutes sponsored by the Akron Public Schools. Although everyone spoke in the target language (French and Spanish) and all the activities - the songs, food, dances, sports, arts and crafts were authentically foreign - the location was not! These Institutes were held in an Ohio backyard, that is, at Hiram House Camp in Chagrin Falls!

These Institutes provided foreign language teachers with many of the opportunities that they needed, but which are so often either too expensive and/or too time-consuming. They were held during the month of August when the teachers were free from their academic schedules and ready to prepare for the next school year. Also, the Institutes were scheduled at the same time and on the same site as the French and Spanish camps (see "The Akron Story Part I: Summer Foreign Language Camps,").

This "living laboratory" permitted the teachers to interact with the student campers while both groups improved their foreign language skills. In addition, this arrangement provided the perfect occasion for teachers to learn a new idea by observing master teachers introduce it to the young student campers.

Many of the teachers most appreciated the opportunity to socialize with the native French and Spanish speakers. Among the natives in the French Institute/Camp were four French citizens,

one Belgian, one Moroccan and one Vietnamese. The Spanish Institute/Camp included two Chileans, two Mexicans, one Puerto Rican and one Spaniard.

Another benefit of the Institute was that the teachers met and lived with all types of linguaphiles. The staff for the two Institutes included a director (the foreign language curriculum specialist in the Akron Public Schools), an assistant director for each Institute, and eighteen master teachers from seven different Ohio school systems. Also on the staff were college students from seven different institutions. Such a combination of language enthusiasts, coupled with 179 energetic teenagers, provided a lively, enjoyable and intellectually stimulating environment.

Besides the intangible benefits of such an experience, many of the teachers registered for and earned three hours of graduate credit at the University of Akron for having participated in such a worthwhile summer activity.

The daily schedule best illustrates the rich diversity of activities available during the one-week institutes. From 7:30 in the morning until 1:30 in the afternoon, the Institute teachers followed the same schedule as the student campers: they joined them for songs, dances, sports, and arts and crafts. During these mornings spent with the campers, the teachers learned a wealth of new, culturally authentic activities that they could readily adapt for use in their own classrooms. Each afternoon began with a one-hour small-group conversational period with native speakers of French and Spanish. All the teachers especially appreciated this chance to discuss such topics as sports, politics, cooking, public education and leisure-time activities with native speakers who served as resource persons and conversation leaders.

From 2:30 to 4:30 in the afternoon, the teachers met for lectures and demonstrations given by visiting teachers and university professors of foreign languages and pedagogy. These sessions were as interesting as they were diverse in subject matter.

Speaker:	Topic:
Isaac Yetiv	French Literature in North Africa
Susan Schunk	Champagne - The Wine and The Region
Janet Waisbrot	Martinique
William Baughin	Dining the French Way
Sandy Duncan	Creative Foreign Language Bulletin Boards
Barbara Snyder	Communicative Competence in the Classroom
Robert Novotny	Hispanic Cooking
Hugo Lijeron	Spanish Folkdancing
Joseph Donatelli	Mexican Life and Culture
Tom Pajor	Using Music to Teach Spanish

Although the teachers all looked forward to each of the day's many scheduled activities, they also enjoyed the free time from 4:30 to 6:00 every afternoon. They went swimming, exchanged teaching ideas or just relaxed on the camp grounds.

In the evening, the Institute teachers joined the student campers for flea-markets, fiestas, carnivals, dancing, and demonstrations of fencing, ballet and pantomime. The camp counselors, students, and teachers rounded out their busy days with a long night walk together to the old fort where they all harmonized in the target language around a bright and blazing bonfire!

Any reminiscing about the the Institute, of course, would not be complete without mention of the meals! At every meal the teachers honed their speaking skills with the native speakers seated at their tables, and the subject of their conversations often centered on what they were eating: fluffy omelettes, golden brioches, spinach souffle, chicken marengo, fruit tarts, and chocolate mousse. The kitchen staff at Hiram House Camp earned the rounds of applause they received for their successful efforts to serve authentic French and Spanish foods.

The results of the final evaluations of both Institutes were overwhelmingly positive. The teachers' comments best illustrate the Institutes' success:

"I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation.."

"Far above any other activity was the opportunity to speak with the natives..."

"The amount of information, new techniques, and ideas from the Institute will all be employed in the classroom and language club."

"It was the catalyst for excitement and anticipation of the coming school year."

"...a very uplifting experience; it gave me courage to start a new year."

"This was the most terrific experience I've ever had outside of living in Mexico!"

It is hoped that the French and Spanish Institutes will become an annual summer event. In such a way, French and Spanish teachers in Ohio can finance a European fling on \$15 a day.
